

### Week 5: Pray for Yang Hua (China)

**Arrest and background** Pastor Yang Hua (41) has been in detention since December 2015, when he resisted police attempts to confiscate a computer hard drive during a raid on Huoshi "Living Stone" Church in Guiyang, capital of Guizhou province in southwest China. In January 2017, he was sentenced to two years and six months in prison for "divulging state secrets", based on the allegation that he posted on the internet a confidential government document outlining plans to persecute Living Stone Church.



Pastor Yang's birth name is Li Guozi, but he uses the pseudonym Yang Hua, which means "looking up to Jehovah". He co-founded Living Stone Church in 2009 and leads it with Pastor Su Tianfu, who is under house arrest.

Living Stone Church grew from twenty Christians meeting in an apartment to become Guiyang's largest house church, with about 700 members, and came under severe pressure to join the government-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Local government officials raided and filmed services, confiscated property, detained members and fined the church for "illegal gatherings". In December 2015, the authorities banned the church, sealed its place of worship (in an office building in central Guiyang) and posted security guards. Members began to meet in home groups and some were followed, interrogated and warned not to attend.

Pastor Yang was tortured in prison in 2016, and in March 2017 he became critically ill with inflammation of the blood vessels leading to swollen, ulcerated legs. He was eventually hospitalised and began to recover. In May, the authorities notified him and Pastor Su that they were being fined 7 million yuan (€911,000), an amount that officials claimed the church had received as "illegal income" but which in fact comprised offerings from church members. In October, Pastor Yang filed a lawsuit against Guizhou local government, claiming that his religious freedom had been violated and a fine wrongly imposed. He and Pastor Su said church members donated the money voluntarily and that it was church income, not the pastors' own.

**Family** Pastor Yang and his wife Wang Hongwu have two sons, Mu'en and Xiangen. Pastor Yang said government prosecutors threatened their lives after he was imprisoned.

**Latest news** In January 2018, a Guizhou district court delivered a final verdict that Yang Hua and Su Tianfu must pay their fine. In late January, the authorities began confiscating church property, including three sites and items inside the church building, and on 11 February they sold it all in lieu of the fine.

#### Prayer Diary

<b>Sunday</b>	Ask God to protect and encourage Pastor Yang in prison.
<b>Monday</b>	Pray for full recovery.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Pray that he would be released soon.
<b>Wednesday</b>	Ask for safety for Wang Hongwu, Mu'en and Xiangen.
<b>Thursday</b>	Pray for wisdom for Living Stone's leaders.
<b>Friday</b>	Ask God to bless the church and keep its members safe.
<b>Saturday</b>	Pray that local government would stop harassing the church.